Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

- 1. (Currently Amended) A method for creating a message template used for embedding hidden messages, the method comprising the steps of:
- (a) determining a the message template performance metric comprising a dispersal measure having both a spatial domain function and a frequency domain function;
- (b) developing a numerical optimization algorithm containing the message template performance metric as a basis for optimization;
- (e) (b) determining the message template geometric configuration comprising:
 - (i) determining a message template capacity
 - (ii) determining a message template area; and
- (c) developing a numerical optimization algorithm containing the message template performance metric as a basis for optimization comprising:
 - i) initializing a current configuration that is randomly

selected; and

ii) applying simulated annealing to the current

configuration

- (d) applying the numerical optimization algorithm to the message template geometric configuration which results in an optimal message template.
- 2. (Currently Amended) The method as a <u>as in</u> claim 1, wherein step (a) includes providing the spatial domain component as a requirement to disperse ones within the message template and providing the frequency domain component as a requirement as to eliminate replicating shifts.
 - 3. (Canceled)
 - 4. (Canceled)

- 5. (Canceled)
- 6. (Original) The method as in claim 1 further comprising the step of storing the optimal message template.
- 7. (Currently Amended) The method as in claim 1 further comprising using (Lois to insert equation)

$$\underline{Disp(T) = \sum_{i=1}^{k} \min(Tor(\rho_i, \rho_j), 1 \le j \le k, j \ne i)}$$
 as the spatial domain component.

8. (Currently Amended) The method as in claim 1 further comprising the step of using (Lois to insert equation)

$$FDisp(T) = \log_2(|A|)$$

as the frequency domain component.